

the Department of Justice through the DCAA General Counsel.

(ii) When the Assistant Director, Resources, DCAA, makes a determination to release all or a portion of the records on appeal, the records shall be made available promptly to the requester after compliance with procedural requirements. The final denial of a request will be made in writing, explain the exemption(s) invoked, advise that the material being denied does not contain meaningful portions that are reasonably segregable, and also advise the requester of the right of judicial review.

(10) Judicial action. A requester will be deemed to have exhausted his administrative remedies after he has been denied the requested record by the Assistant Director, Resources, or when the Agency fails to respond to his request within the time limits prescribed by the FOIA and this rule. The requester may then seek an order from a U.S. District Court in the district in which he resides or has his principal place of business; the district in which the record is situated; or in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, enjoining the Agency from withholding the record and ordering its production.

[56 FR 49685, Oct. 1, 1991, as amended at 56 FR 56932, Nov. 7, 1991; 57 FR 15254, Apr. 27, 1992; 60 FR 35699, July 11, 1995; 64 FR 1131, Jan. 8, 1999]

#### § 290.8 Fees.

(a) Fees shall be determined in accordance with the DoD fee schedule, which is detailed in DCAAP 5410.14. Fees reflect direct costs for search, review (in the case of commercial requesters), and duplication of documents, collection of which is permitted by the FOIA. Fees are subject to limitations on the nature of assessable fees based on the category of the requester; statutory and automatic waivers based on the category determination and cost of routine collection; and either the waiver or reduction of fees when disclosure serves the public interest.

(b) Fees will not be charged when direct costs for a FOIA request are \$15.00 or less, the automatic fee waiver threshold, regardless of category.

(c) *Fee assessment.* In order to be as responsive as possible to FOIA requests, DCAA organizational elements should adhere to the following when assessing fees:

(1) Evaluate each request to determine the requester category and adequacy of the fee declaration. An adequate fee declaration requires a willingness by the requester to pay fees in an amount equal to, or greater than, the assessable charges for the request.

(2) Provide requesters an opportunity to amend inadequate fee declarations and provide estimates of prospective charges when required. When a requester fails to provide an adequate fee declaration within 30 days after notification of a deficiency, the request for information will be considered withdrawn.

(3) A requester's claims for assessment of fees under a specific category will be carefully considered. The IDA may require a requester to substantiate a claim for assessment under a claimed category. In the absence of requester claims, the IDA will determine the category into which a requester falls, basing its determination on all available information.

(4) When a DCAA organizational element disagrees with a requester claim for fee assessment under a specific category, the IDA will provide the requester with written determination indicating the following:

(i) The requester should furnish additional justification to warrant the category claimed.

(ii) A search for responsive records will not be initiated until agreement has been attained relative to the category of the requester.

(iii) If further category information has not been received within a reasonable period of time, the component will render a final category determination; and

(iv) The determination may be appealed to the Assistant Director, Resources, within 60 calendar days of the date of the determination.

(d) When a DCAA organizational element estimates or determines that allowable charges that a requester may be required to pay are likely to exceed \$250.00, they shall notify the requester

of the likely cost and obtain satisfactory assurance of full payment. This fee declaration generally applies when the requester has a history of prompt payments, however, an advance payment may be required of an amount up to the full estimated charges in the case of requesters with no history of payment.

(e) Where a requester has previously failed to pay a fee charged within 30 calendar days from the date of billing, DCAA organizational elements may require the requester to pay the full amount due, plus any applicable interest or demonstrate satisfaction of the debt, and to make an advance payment of the full amount of estimated fees, before processing begins on a new or pending request.

(f) After all work is completed on a request, and the documents are ready for release, DCAA organizational elements may request payment before forwarding the documents if there is no payment history on the requester, or if the requester has previously failed to pay a fee in a timely fashion (i.e., within 30 calendar days from the date of billing). Documents may not be held for release pending payment from requesters with a history of prompt payment.

(g) The administrative time limits for responding to a request will begin only after the DCAA organizational element has received an adequate declaration from the requester stating a willingness to pay fees, and satisfaction that all outstanding debts have been paid.

(h) DCAA organizational elements can bill requesters for services provided in responding to a request. Payment of fees may be made by personal check, bank draft drawn on a U.S. bank, or by U.S. Postal money order. All payments of this type are to be made payable to the U.S. Treasurer.

(i) *Aggregating requests.* Occasionally, a requester may file multiple requests at the same time, each seeking portions of a document or documents, solely to avoid payments of fees. When a DCAA organizational element reasonably believes that a requester is attempting to do so, the DCAA organizational element may aggregate such requests and charge accordingly. One ele-

ment to be considered would be the time period in which the requests have occurred. In no case may DCAA organizational elements aggregate multiple requests on unrelated subjects from one requester.

(j) *Fee waivers.* (1) The determination to waive fees is at the discretion of IDAs designated in this rule. When direct costs for a FOIA request total the automatic fee waiver threshold, or is less, fees shall be waived automatically for all requesters, regardless of category.

(2) Documents will be furnished without charge, or at a charge reduced below fees assessed to the categories of requesters, when the IDA determines that a waiver or reduction of fees is in the public interest because furnishing the information is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations of DCAA, and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester. DCAA organizational elements should refer to DCAAP 5410.14 for factors to consider in applying fee waivers due to public interest. Each fee decision must be considered on a case-by-case basis and upon the merits of the information provided in each request. When the question of whether to charge or waive the fee cannot be clearly resolved, DCAA organizational elements should rule in favor of the requester.

#### APPENDIX A TO PART 290—DCAA'S ORGANIZATION AND MISSION

(a) Purpose. This section implements 5 U.S.C. 552 by describing the central and field organizations of DCAA.

(b) Origin and Authority. DCAA was established by the Secretary of Defense under Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 5105.36<sup>1</sup> (32 CFR part 357) and began operating on July 1, 1965. Its Director reports to the Comptroller of the Department of Defense.

(c) Objective. Assist in achieving the objective of prudent contracting by providing DoD officials responsible for procurement and contract administration with financial information and advice on proposed or existing contracts and contractors, as appropriate.

(d) Mission. (1) DCAA performs all necessary contract audits for the Department of

<sup>1</sup>Copies may be obtained, at cost, from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161.